

Excerpts from James T. Petty's Diary & transcription



James T. Petty, Private 17th Virginia Infantry Co. B 18-22nd July, 1861

American Civil War Museum

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Transcription

From the American Civil War Museum

Original Pocket Diary of James T. Petty, Private 17th Virginia Infantry Co. B

Diary excerpts from July 18-22, 1861

Thursday July 18, 1861

Arose at 5—"Passed" my wagons out—Am penciling on horseback—Col. Corse just ordered me (about 7 a.m.) to ride to camp for a wagon for Surgeon's wagons relief which is loaded with overcoats—Left coats at McLane's house $\frac{3}{4}$ mile this side our troops—Afternoon—have been in cornfield back of Ware's house above Beauregard's quarters looking at the smoke of the battle now raging at the Ford—The enemy appeared there a few minutes after I left—Different couriers from there concur in saying we have repulsed them twice—the last time very decisively—If our Cavalry (2,000) could have crossed the run & followed up the second retreat they would have cut off all the enemy's advance guard.—The banks were precipitous, however—night—we lost only about 9 or 10 killed & 40 wounded to-day—the enemy were slaughtered by scores & hundreds it is reported—none of the Warren thickest of the flight—9 or 10 wounded—6 days reations were issued to our brigade to-night & sent at 12 p.m.—I retired a little after 12 & slept in the Qr. Mr's tent—Geo. Hope with me—

Friday 19 (July, 1861)

It is certain we did not lose over 10 killed & between 30 & 40 wounded—The ____ regt. fired into our troops & wounded more than the enemy—In heaven's name what do they mean by acting so—they are two quick to fire—Just say boo! & pop goes a gun at whoever is before them—I can't call this courage for brave men are cool—this is the third time they have done this trick—Poor Madison Tyler was indebted to them for his death—shot—by federal prisoners from Martinsburg, came down on Manassa train this morning—Johnston is expected here with his command from Winchester to-day—Our troops will concentrate & a great battle be fought here. Beauregard's "trap" is working admirably and Washington will doubtless soon be in the hands of the bold Southrons to whom it rightly belongs—Uncle Burkitt came down & returned today—Newt went home sick—saw poor Tom Langsters corpse (Alex. Rifles) who was the one killed in our regiment yesterday. A triumphant smile rested like a ray of sunshine upon his marble-like features—He was wounded at 9 o'clock tonight—Just after the battle. The 3 months reports to April 30 copied.

Sunday July 21, 1861

Slept a few minutes between 3 & 4 only—a surpassingly beautiful morn—calm, bright & balmy as May—am writing this & wrote part of a former entry in trenches—6 a.m. artillery has opened near us and fired 4 rounds—all hands ordered to their posts—8 a.m. Firing has commenced in earnest & very near to our position—Read 107th Psalm and stopped at the 11th verse just as a bomb from a rifled cannon whizzed by my head—Our regiment & the 5th N.C. were ordered cross the run—After crossing we with 3 other companies were ordered to deploy as skirmishers—Capt. Simpson chose Way Kendrick & myself as his guard—C.U. Richardson also acted as such—We approached near enough to give a signal to the men at the enemy's guns so as to ascertain who they really were—Encountered 8 Yanks & had to retreat—Capt. S. fell in the water—a puddle waist deep—I fell on a rock & rolled down on the Capt. in the water—Bruised

myself badly & lost my gun in water—came back to the trenches, got another gun & went back to the company—Capt. Simpson ordered me to return to camp—Went back at 11 a.m. & watched the great

battle of Stone Bridge till 5 in the afternoon—At night we were ordered into the trenches at Camp Pickens when a false that the Yanks were coming via Aquia Creek.

Monday 22 (July 1861)

Left camp & rejoined the company in the rain this morning—The Hessians were completely routed yesterday—Sam Thomas & I lay on a hill & watched the fight from 11 a.m. to the time they began to retreat in the afternoon—I was disabled by my leap down the hill. We captured 63 pieces of artillery & 120 ambulances & wagons &c and stores & small arms without number—Poor Yankees! The “forward to Richmond” dispatch of the N.Y. Tribune didn’t seem to have many charms for them yesterday if we may judge from their backward to Washington—Hundreds of our men supplied themselves with gun cloths & oil cloth haversacks that the Yanks threw away in their great Hegira from Bull Run—or Jonathan’s Run as it will probably be called now from the big tracks Jonathan made in that vicinity